

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ISLAMA 03051 281221Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 OMB-01 DOE-15
SOE-02 /083 W

-----011990 281227Z /10

O R 281100Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6489
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
/AMCONSUL LAHORE 4917
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3051

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: ZIA'S PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 2971, B) ISLAMABAD 2744

1. SUMMARY. CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) GEN ZIA HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH INTER ALIA HE SUGGESTED PAKISTAN WOULD BE SERVED BETTER WITH FEWER POLITICAL PARTIES, AGAIN RULED OUT A LONGER-TERM POLITICAL ROLE FOR HIMSELF, REAFFIRMED HIS COMMITMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN A MATTER OF "MONTHS," SPOKE AGAIN ABOUT THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ISLAMA 03051 281221Z

POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND GAVE HIS OWN ENDORSEMENT TO THE NOTION OF A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM FOR PAKISTAN. HE ALSO COMMENTED ON THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A TWO-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE IN LAHORE ON MARCH 27, GENERAL ZIA RESPONDED WITH HIS USUAL CANDOR TO A WIDE RANGE OF QUESTIONS FOCUSED ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN.

3. OF MOST IMMEDIATE INTEREST, HE INDICATED HE HAD NOT YET MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT EXTENDING THE BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY BEYOND THE END OF MARCH BUT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO ENNOUNCING HIS DECISION ON THE MATTER BY 30 MARCH. HE ALSO SPOKE AGAIN OF HIS COMMITMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS, NOTING AGAIN -- AS HE HAS IN THE PAST -- THAT SETTING AN ELECTION DATE IS NEITHER "WEEKS" NOR "YEARS" AWAY; IT IS, HE SAID, A MATTER OF MONTHS."

4. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO CONTINUING SPENSATION ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT BEING ADOPTED IN PAKISTAN, ZIA FLATLY ENDORSED THE IDEA, WHILE ADMITTING IN WHAT HAS COME TO BE TYPICAL ZIA OFFHANDEDNESS THAT HE HAS NO PRECISE IDEA ON HOW THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED (BEYOND THE OBVIOUS, WHICH IS TO DRAFT A NEW CONSTITUTION).

5. ZIA BASED HIS PREFERENCE FOR A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM ON THE NATURE OF ISLAM. "MUSLIMS...BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, ONE PROPHET, AND ONE BOOK. THE TOTALITY OF A MUSLUM IS THAT HE MUST BE RULED BY ONE MAN." THSEFORE, HE CONCLUDED, A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM IS BEST SUITED TBATHE MUSLIM PSYCHE. POLITICALLY, HE SAID HE SEES TWO BENEFITS OF SUCH A SYSTEM. THE FIRST IS THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE ELECTED ON A NATIONAL BASIS, INSTEAD OF A REGIONAL BASIS OR BY A LEGISLATIVE BODY, AS A PRIME MINISTER IS. SECOND, GIVEN THAT PAKISTAN IS A TRIBAL SOCIETY, POLITICS SHOULD START FROM
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ISLAMA 03051 281221Z

ELECTIONS AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL.

6. ZIA COMBINED THESE MUSINGS WITH CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT NUMBER OF POLITICAL PARTIES (TOO MANY). WITHOUT REVERTING TO ONE OF HIS EARLIER REFRAINS ABOUT THE VIRTUES OF PARTY-LESS DEMOCRACY, HE SAID HE BELIEVES THE COUNTRY WOULD BE BETTER OFF WITH FEWER PARTIES, EACH DRAWING FROM A WIDER SPECTRUM OF SUPPORT. SHOOTING FROM THE HIP, HE SUGGESTED ONE POSSIBLE STANDARD FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF A GROUP AS A POLITICAL PARTY COULD BE ITS ABILITY TO COMMAND 20 OR 25 PERCENT OF THE SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY; HE LEFT UNANSWERED, HOWEVER, THE MATTER OF HOW THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD BE ELECTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

7. ON HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE, ZIA AGAIN DISCLAIMED ANY INTEREST IN STANDING FOR OFFICE OR FORMING A PARTY. HE ENDORSED ANEW THE IDEA OF AN INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND CHIDED THE POLITICAL PARTIES FOR THEIR RELUCTANCE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY -- REFERRING TO THE POLITICIANS AS "NUMBERDARIS," CONCERNED MORE WITH SEATS, VOTES, AND MINISTRIES THAN WITH POLICY. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION SUGGESTING THAT THE POLITICIANS FEARED RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT POWER, HE SUGGESTED THEY TALK TO HIS ADVISERS ON THE MATTER OF POWER. HE ALSO SAID AGAIN THAT SUCH AN

INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT COULD NOT BE
UNDERTAKEN UNLESS IT
ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES (REFS A AND B).

8. COMMENTING ON THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY, THE
GENERAL EXPRESSED SATISFACTION IN GENERAL, BUT REFERRING TO THE
RECENT INCREASE IN LAWLESSNESS AND SERIOUS CRIMES, HE BLUNTLY
SUGGESTED THAT A FEW MORE PUBLIC HANGINGS MIGHT BE SALUTARY.

9. ZIA URGED JOURNALISTS TO SET UP A NATIONAL PRESS COUNCIL TO
ENFORCE A CODE OF ETHICS AND INSURE ACCOUNTABILITY. HE DEFENDED
THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION'S TREATMENT OF THE PRESS IN
GENERAL, AND THE CLOSING OF THE LAHORE EDITION OF MUSAWAAT IN
PARTICULAR, NOTING THAT HE HAD "TOLERATED EVEN PERSONAL ATTACKS,"
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ISLAMA 03051 281221Z

(OUR EMPHASIS). HE NOTED ALSO THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY GIVEN
INSTRUCTIONS THAT JOURNALISTS ARRESTED FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE
MARTIAL LAW REGULATIONS SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN LASHES. JOURNALISTS,
HE EXHORTED, SHOULD USE OTHER CRITERIA THAN CIRCULATION IN
DECIDING WHAT STORIES TO PRINT. (COINCIDENTALLY, IT WAS ALSO
REPORTED THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAHORE PRESS CLUB HAD BEEN
ARRESTED FOR WRITING AN ARTICLE IN VIOLATION OF THE BAN ON
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.)

10. COMMENT: THE CONFERENCE WAS OFF-THE-CUFF, ZIA AT HIS BEST AND
WORST. THE IMAGE WAS THAT OF A DECENT, SIMPLE SOLDIER, IMBUED
WITH PATRIOTISM, HONESTY, AND INTEGRITY, TRYING TO DO HIS JOB,
NOT GETTING MUCH HELP FROM THE POLITICIANS, WONDERING ALOUD IF
THERE IS A BETTER WAY OF GOING ABOUT HIS BUSINESS OF GOVERNING,
AND MUSING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES THAT ARE IN THE FOREFRONT OF
HIS MIND.
HUMMEL

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL LEADERS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ISLAMA03051
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780134-0458
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780319/aaaaapxm.tel
Line Count: 153
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f24881bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ISLAMABAD 2971, 78 ISLAMABAD 2744
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3185590
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ZIA'S PRESS CONFERENCE
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, PK, (ZIA UL-HAQ, MOHAMMAD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbs://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f24881bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014